



# Livingston County Department of Planning

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Livingston County Planning Commission and the Cohoctah Township Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Martha Haglund, Principal Planner

**DATE:** April 23, 2025

**SUBJECT:** MP-01-25 Draft Cohoctah Township 2025 Master Plan

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Director

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Principal Planner

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Livingston County Planning Department received correspondence on April 7, 2025, from Cohoctah Township requesting Livingston County Planning Commission review and comment on the proposed *Draft 2025 Cohoctah Township Master Plan*. This review is required by Section 125.3841 of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act (2008). The Planning Act provides surrounding communities and other respondents 63 days to provide comments. This review period expires on June 9, 2025. The proposed Master Plan replaces the *2011 Township Master Plan*.

County Planning Staff reviewed the *Draft Cohoctah Township 2025 Master Plan* for compatibility with the *2018 Livingston County Master Plan* and for potential impacts on neighboring residents and communities.

### Organization of the Draft Cohoctah Township 2025 Master Plan

The Draft 2025 Master Plan consists of eight (8) chapters:

- Chapter 1: Plan Overview
- Chapter 2: Community Character
- Chapter 3: Demographic Profile
- Chapter 4: Transportation Profile
- Chapter 5: Natural Features
- Chapter 6: Existing Land Use
- Chapter 7: Goals & Objectives
- Chapter 8: Future Land Use
- Chapter 9: Implementation Strategies
- Appendix A: Cohoctah Township Citizen Survey
- Appendix B: Master Plan Goals & Objectives Fact Sheet
- Appendix C: Township Resolution Adopting the Plan

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## **Chapter 1: Plan Overview– Purpose, Plan Components, How the Plan was Prepared**

The content of this chapter describes the differences between a Zoning Ordinance and Master Plan. The plan components provide a summary of why and how the chapters are used to shape policy and future land use decisions.

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## **Chapter 2: Community Character – Location, Community History and Community Resources**

The content of this chapter gives an overview of the history and background of the township. It provides general location information and proximity to cities and villages and nearest regional transportation. The chapter also discusses public facilities and services in the township. The newly adopted *2025-2029 Cohoctah Township Recreation Plan* is referenced in this section.

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## **Chapter 3: Demographic Profile –Population, Housing, Income, Occupations, Education, Agriculture, Demographic Trends**

The content of this chapter updates demographic information from the township. A few excerpts can be found below:

*The township's population has been slowly declining since 2000. The population is expected to have very incremental growth over the next 20 years compared to the surrounding townships.*

*The median housing values increased 28% from 2010 to 2020 in the township with a median housing value of \$237,400.*

*The Township has a median household income of \$63,889 compared to Livingston County \$84,274.*

*According to the [2020] census the most common occupations in the township include; management, business, science and arts and service occupations. Education attainment included 85% of residents have a with a high school degree or higher and 14% with bachelor's degree or higher. Regarding agriculture, the township has 32 current Farmland and Open Space preservation contracts.*

The chapter ends, by highlighting trends and planning implications. Summarized below:

- *Older populations will need senior housing.*
- *A declining or steady population should focus on quality of life for current residents before preparing for new ones.*
- *Due to a lower household income, the township could support limited expansion of commercial and industrial development to add employment opportunities.*
- *Due to the large amount of the PA 116 Farmland designated lands in the township, a future land use classification could encourage the continuation of agriculture activities.*



**Staff Comments:** Population has steadily decreased and with limited infrastructure in the township, the housing will likely remain the same.

Another resource to utilize for housing trends is the [State of Michigan Housing Needs Assessment Website](#). The link to Cohoctah Township Needs Assessment is: [HERE](#)

Demographic data from the 2019-2023 American Community Survey is available and should be used as the most current demographic information.

**Staff Comments:** The updates to the demographic chapter describe population statistics and demographics in a clear and concise manner. The trends and planning implications suggested are appropriate.

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#### **Chapter 4: Transportation Profile** - Existing Road Conditions, Transportation Improvements, Traffic Volumes, Traffic Accidents, Other Transportation Resources

The chapter summarizes road conditions, traffic generation, and accident information. Other transportation resources mentioned include the Livingston Essential Transportation Service, Maple Grove Airport in Conway Township and the Great Lakes Central Railway that runs through the township.

*The greatest traffic flows are found along the following six (6) township roadways: Oak Grove; Sanford; Chase Lake; Cohoctah; Faussett; and Owosso. The majority of these roadways (4) are paved primary roadways, while two (2) roadways are local gravel (Sanford and Owosso).*

**Staff Comments:** The chapter gives a thorough review and detailed map that can be referenced later to prioritize traffic improvements.

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#### **Chapter 5: Natural Features:** Geology, Soils and Septic Limitations, Watersheds, Lakes, Ponds Rivers, Wetlands and Floodplains, Agricultural Land, Woodlands, Livingston County High-Quality Natural Features, Environmental Concerns.

*Prime farmland typically produces higher crop yields and may require less intensive management practices. The two largest crops grown in Cohoctah Township are corn and soybeans. The largest area of contiguous Prime Farmland soil is in the northeast corner of the Township primarily in Sections 1,2,3,11 and 12. This northeast area of Prime Farmland corresponds with the township quadrant that has the second highest number of P.A. 116 contracts."*

**Woodlands and Tree Canopy:** The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) updated land use/land cover for each community in the Southeast Michigan region indicates the Township comprises of 10,185 acres of tree canopy (41.4% of the Township), significantly more compared to Handy (6,421 acres), Howell (8,377 acres), Conway (7,678 acres) Townships.



**Included Maps:** Slope, Soils, Soil Septic Limitations, Wetlands, Township Floodplains, Prime Farmland, Livingston County High-Quality Natural Areas, Environmental Concerns

**Staff Comments:** With regards to the environmental concerns section, another resource the township could utilize is the EGLE RIDE Mapper Tool to identify any additional environmental concerns.

The 2022 Livingston County Hazard Mitigation Plan could be referenced in this section.

The 2009 maps should be updated into the 2024 format. We think this would improve the consistency, not only for this Master Plan but for future versions as well.

Overall, the township's description of their natural features and environmental concerns is very thorough and will help to guide land use decisions.

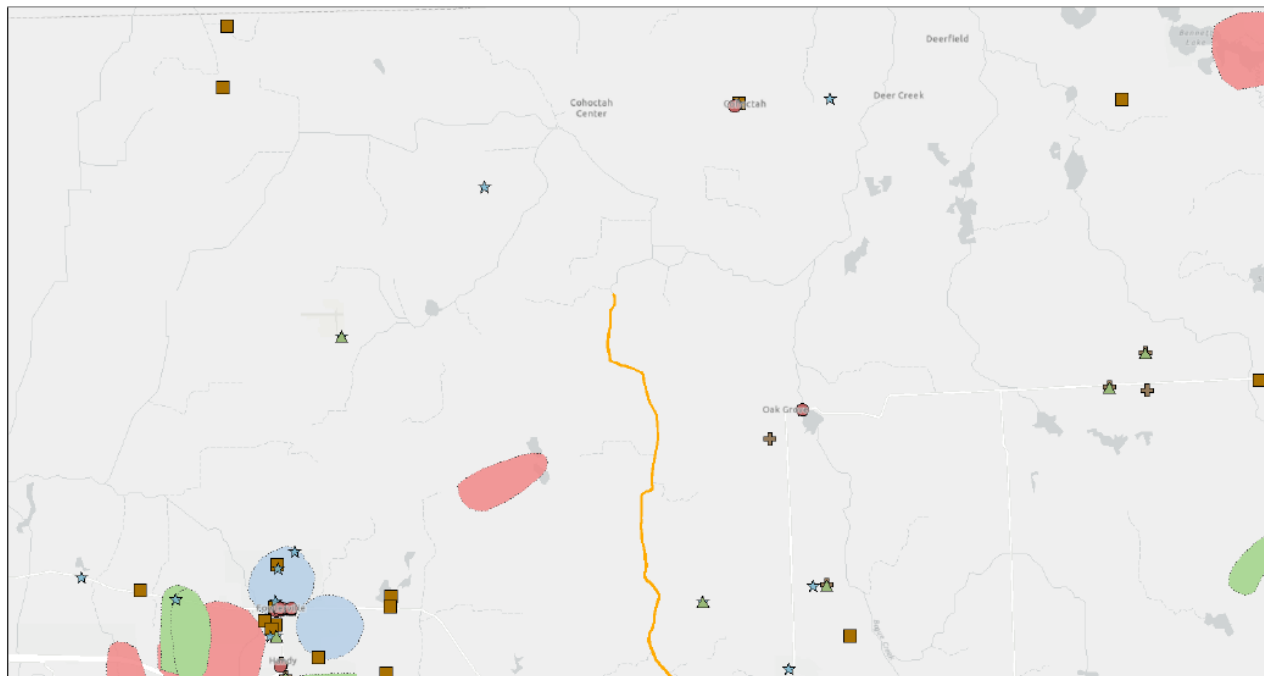
### Additional Resource

#### EGLE Remediation Information Data Exchange (RIDE) Mapper:

The website provides more information once the feature is clicked. Most will have historical documents attached such as the Baseline Environmental Assessments or Health Department Reports.

<https://www.michigan.gov/egle/maps-data/ride-mapper>

Cohoctah Township Area-Environmental Concerns



4/16/2025, 2:42:00 PM

Part 213 Leaking Underground Storage Tanks

● Open

▲ Closed

Part 211 Underground Storage Tanks

✚ Active

★ Closed

■ Part 201 Environmental Contamination Sites

□ NPL Superfund Site Boundaries (EPA Public)

Wellhead Protection Areas

■ Type 1 Traditional WHPA

■ Type 1 Provisional WHPA

■ Type 2 Provisional WHPA

1:94,553

0 0.75 1.5 3 mi  
0 1.25 2.5 5 km



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FMO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



## Chapter 6: Existing Land Use: Land Use Categories, with the addition of Alternative Energy category for Cohoctah Township.

**Staff Comments:** The existing land use map updates and improves the map from the 2011 Cohoctah Township Master Plan. This section does not indicate if there have been any major changes in existing land use since 2011. However, it appears agriculture and rural residential are consistently the largest land use in the township with little changes.

Although the Renewable Energy Overlay District is planned for the areas indicated on the map, they are not currently an existing use. The Renewable Energy Overlay/Solar Energy Overlay District locations belong on the zoning and future land use map.

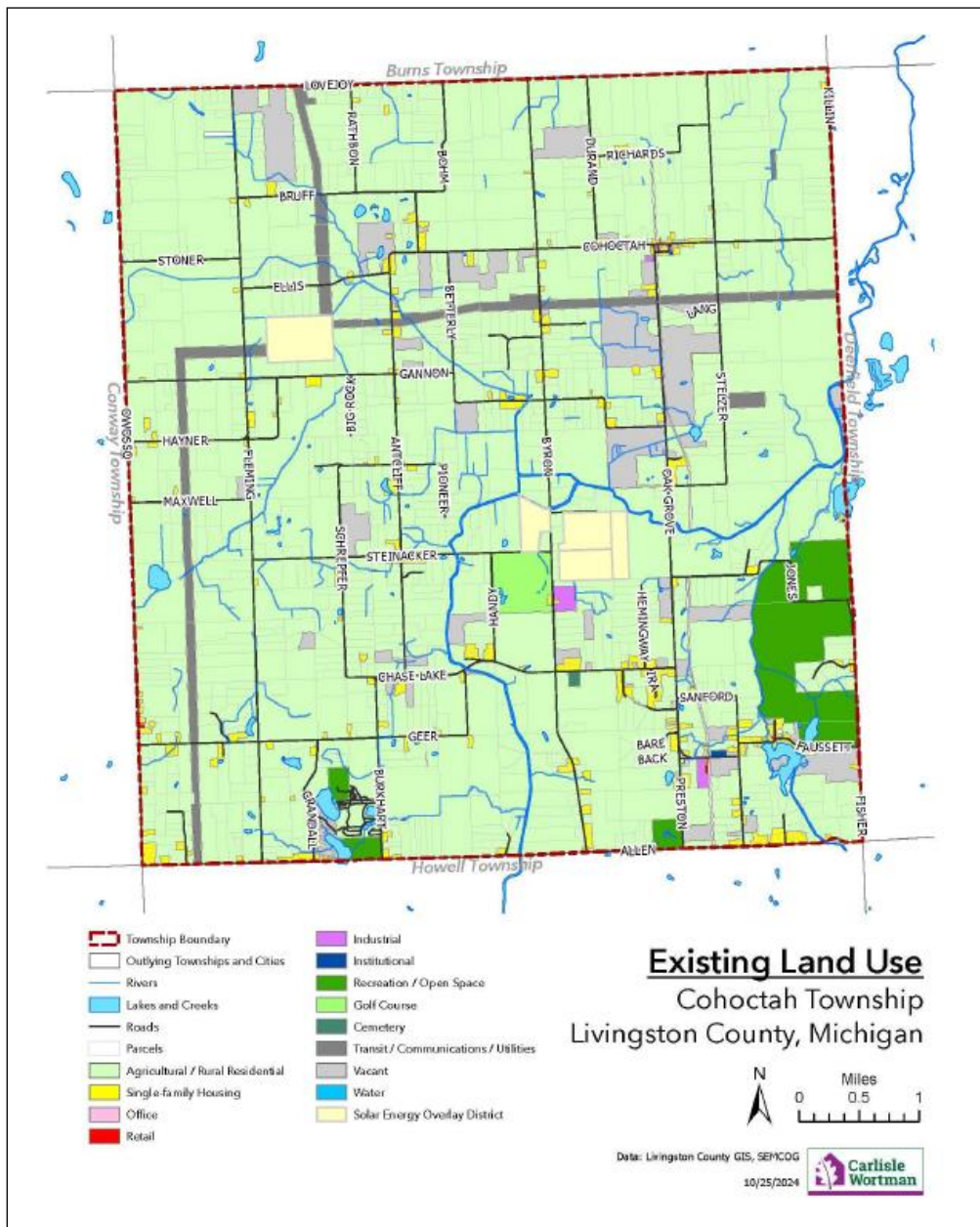






Table 6-1: Existing Land Use	
Land Use Category	Acres
Agricultural	20,432.5
Single-Family Housing	641.0
Recreation / Open Space	773.7
TCU (Transportation, Communication, & Utilities)	713.8
Golf Course	156.6
Industrial	39.7
Office & Retail	8.8
Cemetery	8.1
Institutional	6.6
Vacant	1,432.9
Water	294.7
Total	24,508.4

## Chapter 7: Goals & Objectives: Development of Goals and Objectives

The Township organized their goals into 12 different categories. Each goal has several objectives and strategies to reach those goals. The goals and objectives were established based on development trends, demographics, and public engagement including a community survey.

A summary of the of those goals are as follows.

- 1. Planning and Zoning:** *Coordinate planning efforts with neighboring communities.*
  - *Coordinate planning efforts regarding shared resources such as watersheds and road, greenway and water corridors.*
  - *Collaborate with neighboring communities on the provision of governmental facilities and services.*
- 2. Township Services and Facilities:** *Develop township services and facilities as necessary and financially practical.*
  - *Increase public services and facilities only when consistent with demand from township population growth.*
  - *Support the implementation of the Cohoctah Township Parks & Recreation Plan.*
- 3. Transportation:** *Provide adequate access to the road system with as few traffic interruptions as possible.*
  - *Keep curb cuts to a minimum to lessen their impact on road maintenance, traffic flow, safety, and aesthetics.*
  - *Preserve the rural feel of the current road network, including continuing the current mix of paved and unpaved roads, preserving the tree canopy, and screening buildings from the view of passers-by on roads.*
- 4. Natural Features and Open Space Preservation:** *Preserve and enhance township's rural character, natural systems, and open space.*
  - *Development in the Township should be directed to areas that are most capable of sustaining physical changes to the landscape without negatively impacting the community's natural features.*



- 5. Agriculture** *Keep farming, including the retention of “Agricultural land” as defined by 451 PA of 1994, being MCL 324.63502(1), a viable and visible part of Cohoctah Township’s future land use plan.*
  - *Use zoning and site planning techniques to preserve agricultural land, open space, and unobstructed views of fields, pastures, and agricultural buildings.*
  - *Give farmers the tools or range of options necessary to develop portions of their property while keeping farming viable on the rest.*
  - *Explore transfer of development rights (TDR), purchase of development rights (PDR) land conservancy, P.A. 116, or other methods to preserve working agricultural lands.*
- 6. Housing and Residential Development:** *Preserve a traditional rural character to the land use pattern in the township while planning for orderly future residential development.*
  - *Carefully review development in settlement areas to preserve the unique character of these communities.*
  - *Promote open space developments, innovative residential design, and site development standards that maintain the rural character of the township and conserve farmland and open space.*
- 7. Commercial Areas and Development:** *Encourage only commercial development that serves the needs of the township residents.*
  - *Continue the use of home occupations to accommodate small scale office and service establishments.*
  - *Limit small box stores to only settlement districts.*
- 8. Industrial Areas and Development:** *Allow light industrial uses in appropriate areas that do not create adverse impacts on surrounding existing or future land uses.*
  - *Allow only light industrial uses that can be supported by existing paved roads.*
- 9. Hazard Mitigation:** *Conserve natural features and protect residents and property from natural or man-made hazards.*
  - *Prevent new construction in flood plains and construction which would degrade wetlands; and in sensitive natural resource areas only allow development harmonious with the preservation of natural features on the site.*
- 10. Alternative Energy:** *Provide opportunities for alternative energy options to be introduced to the area while still preserving the rural character of the Township.*
  - *Ensure that any large-scale positive impacts of such projects be weighed against local negative impacts, including the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Cohoctah Township and the degradation or diminishment of agricultural land.*
  - *Acknowledge the importance of renewable energy, but note that other priorities such as local ecosystems, agricultural production and retention of agricultural land, transmission infrastructure capacity, and rural aesthetics are equally important. Therefore, if utility scale solar or wind facilities are approved and operational in the Township, the Township may restrict the size of new proposals, or not approve them at all, in order to maintain balance among the community’s priorities.*
- 11. Small Box Stores:** *Provide residents with opportunities to access various commercial options within the Township.*



- *Limit small box stores as only a permitted use in the Settlement district.*
- *Ensure new small box stores are constructed and designed in a manner that fits the aesthetics and character of the neighborhood it is located in.*

**12. Medium/High Density Residential Development:** *Allow the development of medium to high density residential developments within the Township to provide growth opportunities for the community and residents of all ages.*

- *Limit the location of such developments to within the Settlement District of the Township.*
- *Ensure new developments are constructed and designed to be compatible with the surrounding historical architecture of the community.*

**Staff Comments:** *Some of the objectives focus development in the three settlement areas in the Cohoctah Township. The settlement areas could be an opportunity to create subarea plans for each settlement area and perhaps include some form-base techniques to preserve the unique character of the communities.*

*There were several comments in their community survey related to internet and broadband quality/availability. The Township should include goals to assess existing availability of internet services and strategize ways to enhance or increase that infrastructure.*

*Another suggestion would be to include some of the planning implications and trends discussed in the demographics chapter like planning for an aging population or ways to enhance quality of life for its existing residents rather than increasing amenities for a growing population.*

*Overall, the goals and objectives are appropriate. The goals and objectives are similar to the feedback generated during our 2025 Livingston County Master Plan public engagement.*

**Chapter 8: Future Land Use:** Future Land Use Classifications, Residential, Conservation, Commercial and Industrial Uses, Future Land Use Map.

The content of this chapter highlights the differences between future land use and zoning ordinance. The chapter also gives a detailed description of future land use categories: Settlement, Agriculture/Residential, Rural Residential, Suburban Residential, Manufactured Home Residential, Recreation Residential, Open Space and Rural Preservation District, River Conservation, Public/Recreation, Commercial and Industrial Land Uses, Commercial, and Light Industrial.





Below is the zoning plan:

<b>Table 8-1: Future Land Use Residential Designations and Corresponding Zoning Districts</b>			
<b>Residential Future Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Future Land Use Development Densities</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning District (s)</b>	<b>Zoning District Development Densities</b>
Settlement	Similar scale, density, and lot size as existing Settlement lots	Settlement	30,000 square feet
Agricultural /Residential	1 dwelling unit per 10 acres	Agricultural Residential	20 acres except as otherwise provided in the zoning ordinance
Rural Residential	1 dwelling unit per 2 acres	Rural Residential	2 acres
Suburban Residential	1 dwelling unit per 1 acre	Suburban Residential	1 acre 21,780 sq. ft. with public or common sewer and water
Manufactured Home Residential	15,000 sq. ft. with public or common sewer and water 25,000 sq. ft. without public or common sewer and water	Mobile Home Residential	15,000 sq. ft. with public or common sewer and water 25,000 sq. ft. without public or common sewer and water
Recreation Residential	Similar scale, density, and lot size as existing Recreation Residential lots	Settlement	30,000 square feet

Source: Cohoctah Township Zoning Ordinance, Adopted 1987.

<b>Table 8-2: Future Land Use Non-Residential Designations and Corresponding Zoning Districts</b>			
<b>Non-Residential Future Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Future Land Use Development Densities</b>	<b>Corresponding Zoning District (s)</b>	<b>Zoning District Development Densities</b>
River Conservation	500 ft. stream buffer 100 ft. wetland buffer	Waterways Resource Development	20 Acres
Public/Recreation	Not specific	Resource Development	20 Acres except as otherwise provided in the zoning ordinance
Commercial	Not specific	Neighborhood Service Commercial	1 acre 15,000 square feet with public sewer & water
Light Industrial	Not specific	Light Industrial	2 acres 40,000 square feet with public sewer & water

Source: Cohoctah Township Zoning Ordinance, Adopted 1987.



**Staff Comments:** *The Cohoctah Township Planning Commission reviewed the future land use map and determined it should remain the same from the 2011 Master Plan. The map should be updated in the most recent format for consistency and for future versions of the Master Plan.*

*The SEO (Solar Energy Overlay) is labeled on the FLU Map but not the legend. These areas are also known as the Renewable Energy Overlay according to their adopted Renewable Energy Ordinances.*

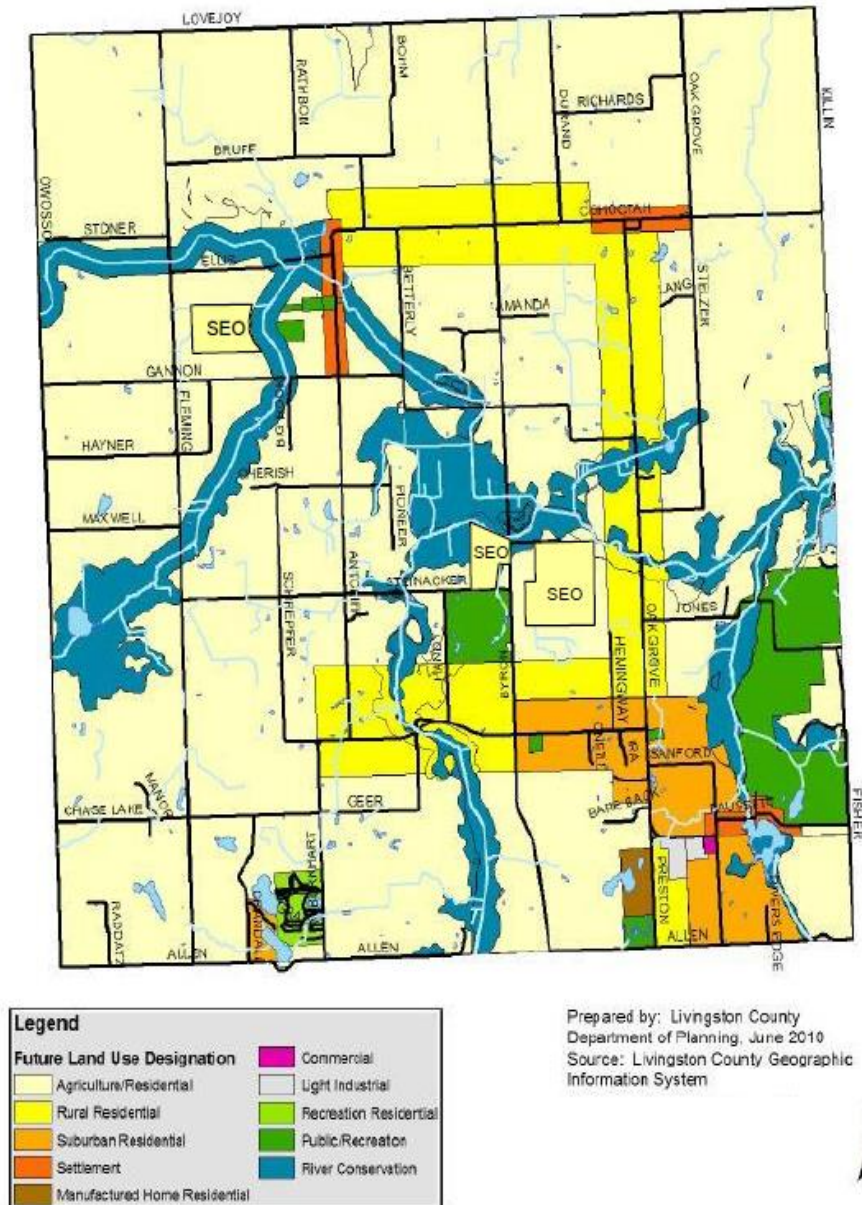
**Staff Comments:** *Cohoctah is surrounded by planned agricultural residential districts. The agricultural residential district requires a 20-acre minimum. The minimum lot standards are inconsistent, between Conway, Cohoctah and Deerfield Township borders. The border along Conway Township requires a 2-acre minimum unless it is a farm which would be 20 acres. The Deerfield Township border requires 5–20-acre minimum depending on the size of the farm.*

*Cohoctah's land use category, suburban residential to the south is consistent with Howell Township's agricultural residential lot dimension standards of 1 dwelling/1 acre. However, the remaining area along the border would be inconsistent with 20-acre lot minimums in Cohoctah Township with 1-acre lot minimums in Howell Township.*

*Due to the inconsistent minimum lot requirements along its' border, staff would recommend Cohoctah Township include a goal to review their agricultural residential district standards. This could be included under their overarching goal for 1.) Planning and Zoning: coordinating planning efforts with neighboring communities.*

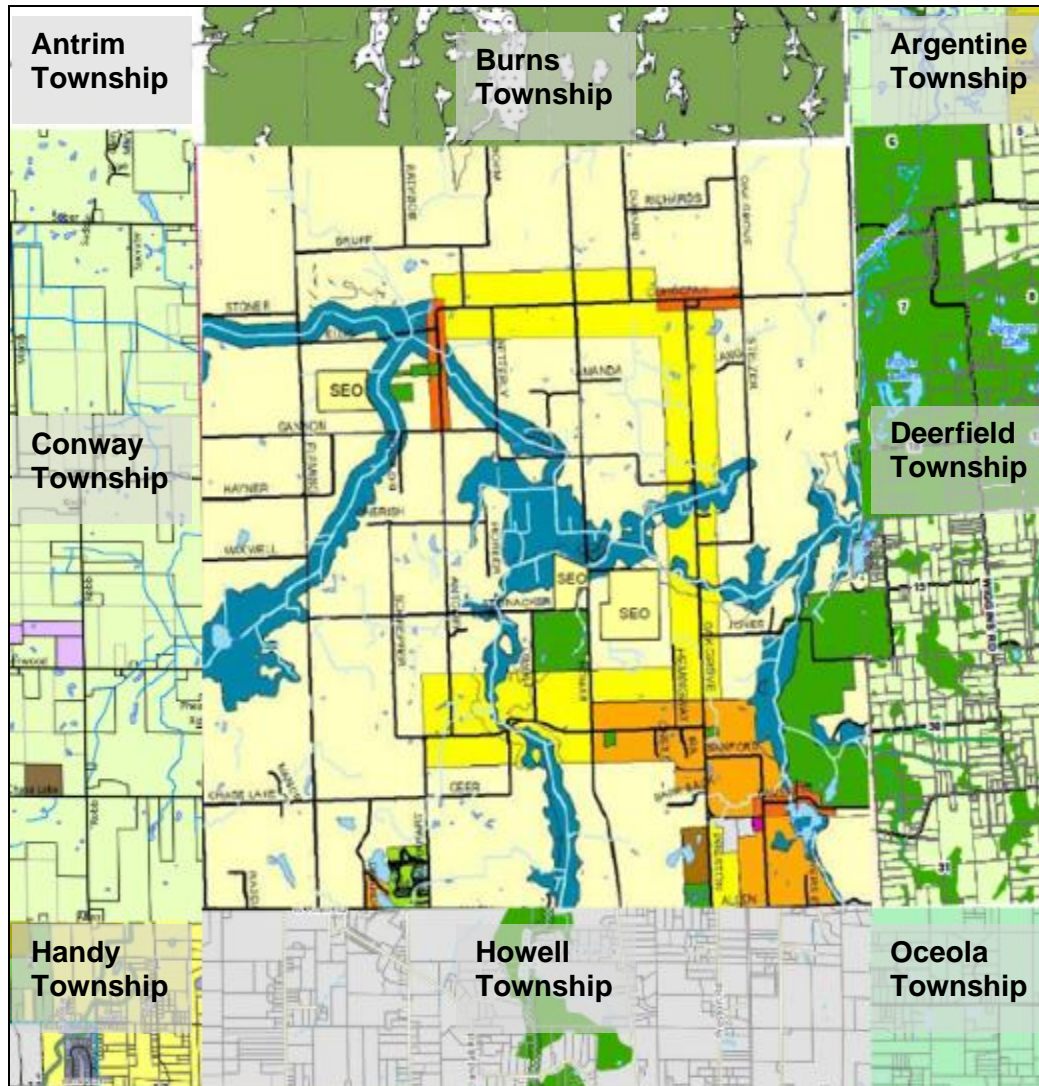


## Cohoctah Township Future Land Use





## Adjacent Communities: Future Land Use Maps



### 9: Implementation: Implementation Strategies

The content of this chapter reviews ways to use the plan effectively. Some strategies listed include:

- *Using the plan consistently and reference the future land use map for proposed map amendments.*
- *Periodically update the plan and associated ordinances.*
- *Educate the public and continually garner public input.*
- *Preserve open space in the township incorporating Future Land Use Category.*
- *Utilize the Planned Unit Development housing option for more flexible residential development options.*





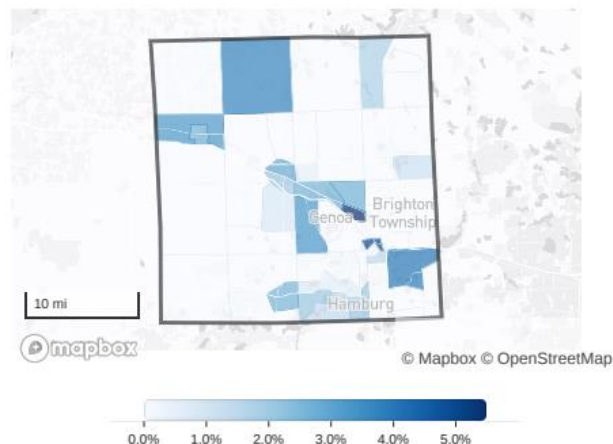
**Staff Comments:** Public Act 153 of 2024 Amended section 7, 15 & 33 of 2008 PA 33 (MCL 125.3807 et seq.) requiring a master plan to review residential development in their communities: **“Sec. 33 (2) (e) An assessment of the community’s existing and forecasted housing demands, with strategies and polices for addressing those demands”.**

One of the driving factors for the decrease in population could be the age of residents in the township. Generally, single-family homes on acreage are more difficult to maintain and seniors may have limited options in the township for a smaller, more manageable homes. Approximately 70% of participants that completed the community survey held that single family homes built on at least 5 acres would be most appropriate for future development in the township. However, the survey did not ask the age of the respondents. There could be an opportunity to further investigate the housing needs specifically for the senior population in the township. Incorporating a goal and associated implementation strategies to understand housing needs of its seniors would align with the planning implication in Chapter 3: “The need for senior housing options may start to increase, a portion of the Township should be master planned for senior living in the coming years.”

**Staff Comments:** With regards to housing, Cohoctah Township is in a unique situation, with the township projected to experience a decrease in population, residential development will likely remain the same. With the higher vacancy rates compared to other townships in the county, there does not seem to be a housing shortage for single family homes in Cohoctah Township. Furthermore, Cohoctah Township does not have municipal water and sewer, that limits the capability to develop dense residential projects.

Overall, Cohoctah Township's Master Plan effectively evaluates current housing demands and market conditions. Their planning strategies note things about adding varying housing types for smaller families. The implementation section outlines housing strategies for cluster development, aiming to preserve open space while focusing on concentrated growth near major roadways and settlement areas.

Share of Homes That  
Are Vacant and Available  
(2023)



Source: American Community Survey (ACS), US Census Bureau





### **Appendix A: Cohoctah Township Citizen Survey**

Their community survey consisted of multiple answers and open-ended questions. There were seven questions that collected a total of 109 responses. The township received feedback on residential growth, land use, park amenities, renewable energy regulation, and small box stores.

### **Appendix B: Cohoctah Township Master Plan Goals & Objectives Fact Sheet**

The township goals and objective fact sheet summarizes demographics and trends, township services/facilities, transportation, commercial and industrial areas, natural features, agriculture, residential development and hazard mitigation.

**Staff Comments:** *The goal and objective fact sheet is detailed summary that could also be developed into an executive summary to put at the beginning of the Master Plan.*

**Staff Comments:** *A suggestion related to the organization of the plan, is to number or label the maps, similar to how the tables are organized.*

**County Staff Recommendation: Approval:** The 2025 Cohoctah Township Master Plan is consistent with land use and trends and incorporates public feedback. County Planning Staff recommend that the Cohoctah Township consider all staff suggestions prior to final adoption.